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Proportional Representation. By JOHN H. HUMPHREYS. London, Methuen and Company, 1911.—xxi, 400 pp.

Never have the advocates of proportional representation had a better opportunity to secure a hearing in England than at the present time, when all parties are agreed that radical electoral reform is imperatively demanded, and Mr. Asquith is proposing a universal manhood suffrage bill, which will doubtless be accompanied by a redistribution of seats. Mr. Humphreys, who is secretary of the Proportional Representation Society, is well qualified to present his cause. He has studied Belgian, Swedish, Transvaal and other elections at first hand (page 206); and he has evidently allowed no developments in his field to escape his observation, for he describes the latest movements in Oregon on the part of the People's Power League.

Quite properly he devotes many pages of his volume to a criticism of the single-district system, demonstrating that it results in gross inequalities in representation (page 18), facilitates violent changes in party government (pages 20, 43), affords no real index of political forces and thus encourages politicians to undertake programs which have no genuine support (pages 41, 42), invites candidates to "trim" instead of honestly and clearly declaring their policies (pages 44, 45), and, finally, is in no small measure responsible for the increasing degradation of party strife by making the battle turn upon a few votes and thus giving the "marginal voters" a weight all out of reason. Of course these arguments and the examples cited in support of them are by no means new, nor do they constitute the more valuable part of the volume.

After stating the case against the single-member district, our author examines the several schemes of proportional representation now in force in various countries or seriously proposed; and, considering them from the point of view of simplicity and applicability to English conditions, he arranges them in the following order: (1) The single-transferable-vote system, in which the surplus votes are taken from the top of the successful candidate's heap. (2) The Belgian list system, with its single vote. (3) The single-transferable-vote system, in which the surplus votes are distributed proportionately to the next preferences. (4) List systems in which more than one vote is recorded (page 206). On the whole, Mr. Humphreys leans toward the single-transferable-vote system, although he believes that the list systems are immeasurably superior to ordinary electoral methods (page 207). He states the grounds for his position very briefly: The single-transferable-vote system is more elastic than the list system, is more easily adapted to new

political conditions, appeals with greater force to English-speaking peoples and promises more general uniformity throughout the British Empire than any other scheme.

In concrete form his proposition for England is as follows : Abandon the system of single-district constituencies with their ever-changing boundaries and treat the natural divisions of the country (its counties, large towns *etc.*) as permanent constituencies, with representation varying with the growth or decrease of their populations. Then adopt the single transferable vote in elections (page 267).

Mr. Humphreys has increased the value of his work by a series of appendices on the single vote in Japan, the Swedish and Finnish systems, the second ballot, statistical tables of the general elections in Great Britain from 1885 to 1910, and preferential voting. It is clearly a volume which every student of modern politics should have within reach.

C. A. B.

The Business of Congress. By SAMUEL W. MCCALL. New York, The Columbia University Press, 1911.—215 pp.

It is unfortunately true that many of the books on American government are written by men who have little first-hand acquaintance with the processes of governing. This is so because our public life fails to attract scholars like the Morleys, Balfours and Birrells who assume leadership in the English Parliament. Mr. McCall, however, does represent that rare combination of politics and letters ; and his book will make a double appeal to the student as being written in a scholarly way and as proceeding from an authoritative source. The subject is a limited one : how Congress works ; but within that field there is no book of equal value for the general reader.

Mr. McCall discusses the functions of Congress, the organization and procedure of both houses, the committees, the rules, the order of business, filibustering *etc.* The views he expresses, after eighteen years of service in the House, deserve very serious attention. He has no sympathy with the assault upon the speaker's power, which, within less than two years, has divested that officer of some most important functions. The so-called autocracy of Mr. Cannon (and of his predecessors) depended always on his executing the will of the majority and, wielded by him or some other member of the House, was necessary to the proper transaction of business in an assembly which has no ministers to guide it. The power of the speaker has evolved naturally and steadily ; no interruption of its exercise can be permanent.